The NEWS LETTER

OF THE COLLEGE ENGLISH ASSOCIATION

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nd the Lords of the ilistines Came Up

he Philistines bound Samson h green withes and new ropes nailed his hair to the rafters h a pin, but he got loose every e until they cut his hair off al- ether.

ast year, when we held our or- ization-meeting in New York ing Christmas week, we held a ond meeting the next day which y few were able to attend, but ich was, in some ways, more in- esting than the first. The dis- sion I remember best had to do h a new kind of Philistinism, a t of psycho-socio-politico-ped- gical program for the abolish- nt of English altogether, except a 'social study.' One or two akers were very blue about it. ey spoke of powerful pressure- ups at work upon college Eng- h, guided in their thinking by a rent and callow instrumental- h. Enjoying prestige as prophets the social movement these are ly to wreck something they did build and put in its place some- ng shaky in its foundations, how- r showy in elevation.

Teaching as I do in an endowed lege in the east I felt that the ture was perhaps too sombrely nted. But now I am not sure. cial theorizing was certain to af- t college English in time. But own experience makes me in- mpetent to judge what is happen- elsewhere, though I hear stories The socio-political program has a werful appeal to an age that es nothing for the past, for it es as looking towards the future d criticizes existing teaching of rature because this looks to- rds the past. For what we have led liberal or humane culture it bstitutes what is called socializa- n. It apparently denies that lit- ature has any real importance at except as sociology, and thinks t it might as well be abolished a subject and absorbed by the partment of social science.

The trouble with educational ories like this one is that they e too simple. Even when they e not disguised doctrinism or opaganda, they are still too sim- . And the theorists have the akness as well as the strength all reformers, who know that a n wedge penetrates quicker. For e sake of a near and obvious ue they are willing to sacrifice others. This is a special mark the Philistine.

To one who has survived forty rs of educational theorizing this w doctrine has a familiar ancient hlike smell. I can remember the leological times of the theory of cipline and the mesological per- of the theory of interest and ation, and have lasted into the logical era of the theory of so- l adjustment. The theories all m to have this in common: they ore the truth—disconcerting, but

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NOTICE

College Teachers of English at the undergraduate level who wish to become members of the College English Association may do so by notifying the Treasurer pro tem., and enclosing one dollar (temporary dues). Address Professor W. R. Richardson, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Va.

First Annual Meeting

The first annual meeting of the College English Association will be held in New Orleans on the evening of December 28, 1939. Day and hour have been allotted the CEA by the Modern Language Association and announcement will be made in MLA bulletins. More detailed announcement of program and procedures will go out to our own members in November; but for the convenience of those who must plan far in advance, this preliminary announcement is made.

Members will meet at the dinner (which non-members also are welcome to attend) where there will be a brief but notable program of speeches and informal greetings, to be followed by the business meeting. Following the announced policy of this association, the dinner will be inexpensive. All members in New Orleans during the holidays will undoubtedly wish to attend the MLA banquet also, which occurs on the following evening.

Announcements of special rates on the railroads or by water will be made in MLA bulletins and in our own November "News Letter."

Members of a program committee for the New Orleans meeting are Clifford P. Lyons, University of Florida, Herbert Drennon, Mississippi State College, Cleanth Brooks, La. State Univ., and the Secretary pro. tem. Committee on local arrangements, John E. Uhler, Wm. J. Oliver, L. S. U.

NOTICE

Members who are planning to attend the first annual meeting of CEA in New Orleans Thursday evening, Dec. 28, and non-members who wish to attend the dinner will confer a favor if they will inform the Secretary pro tem. by postcard. Address Professor Burges Johnson, Union College, Schenectady, N. Y.

New England Meeting

On November 3 and 4, at the time of the annual fall convention of the New England Association of Teachers of English, there will be a meeting to which all College Teachers of English are invited whether they are members of the New England Association or not. One purpose of this meeting is the consideration of the question whether a new England section of the C. E. A. is desired, and time has been assigned for a discussion of this question. A very interesting program is also offered in which the following talks or papers will be presented:

Miss Agnes Perkins of Wellesley will speak on "The Feasibility of a Major in Rhetoric."

George Anderson of Brown, on "Old English as Literature."

F. Cudworth Flint of Dartmouth, on "The Book, the Mind, and Understanding."

Theodore Morrison of Harvard, on "Freshman English."

Frederick Pottle of Yale, on "How Boswell Wrote the "Life of Johnson."

Notices of the meeting will be sent to all of the New England colleges, but any individuals who are interested in attending might write to F. Wylie Sypher, Simmons College, Boston, Massachusetts.

Communications to the final News Letter of the year should be sent to the Sec. pro tem. by Nov. 15.

Ad Lectionem Suam

When Autumn's winds denude the grove,
I seek my lecture where it lurks
'Mid the unpublished portion of
My works,

And ponder, while its sheets I scan,
How many years away have slipt
Since first I penned that ancient manuscript.

I know thee well—nor can mistake
The old accustomed pencil stroke
Denoting where I mostly make
A joke,—

Or where coy brackets signify
Those echoes faint of ancient wit
Which, if a lady's present, I
Omit.

Though Truth enlarge her widening range,
And knowledge be with time increased,
Yet thou, my Lecture, does not change
The least,

But fixed immutable amidst
The advent of a newer lore,
Maintainest calmly what thou didst
Before.

Once more for intellectual food
Thou'lt serve: an added phrase or two
Will make thee really just as good
As new:

And listening crowds, that throng the spot,
True Learning's cup intent to drain,
Will cry "The old familiar rot
Again!"

from "The Oxford Magazine."

Our Permanent Officers

The following nominating committee has been appointed by acting President Gay to serve until January 1. It will present a slate to be voted upon at the annual meeting December 28 in New Orleans. Suggestions to any one of the committee would doubtless be welcome. They must propose candidates for the offices of president, two vice-presidents, secretary, treasurer, and for nine directors representing various geographical areas. At this first election three directors will be chosen for a one-year term, three for a two-year term and three for three years. Eventually all directors will be elected for a three-year term. The nominating committee is as follows: Professor Henry C. F. Staunton, Notre Dame, Chairman; Margaret Ball, Mt. Holyoke; Louise Pound, Nebraska; George F. Reynolds, Colorado; and N. Bryllion Fagin, Johns Hopkins.

Why the CEA?

(Among letters from members and prospective members in the secretary's files are more than a hundred which state concisely or at length their writers' reasons for welcoming a new association and their ideas as to its purposes. One of these containing controversial points has been selected for publication in part. —Sec. pro tem.)

My first preference may seem to put the cart before the horse. I suggest this: Let us first organize and collect dues, and then discuss and formulate major aims and objectives. Much time can be wasted talking about aims when, instead, we are really united by our love of Literature and by the ideals, values and purposes it teaches.

I doubt whether there has been a more propitious moment in the history of Civilization than the present for propagating that value of Literature which Emerson called "the upbuilding of the dignity of Man." Sometimes it seems that all of us are too prone to forget the great good likely to ensue when two or three are gathered together out of loyalty to great causes. When critics told Cobden his ideas of Free Trade were visionary and impossible, he replied: "Then if that is the only objection, let us begin at once."

At the same time, I would not care to join an Association that stands for dilettantism. For dilettantism, by reason of its very spinelessness, cannot stand long. On the other hand, there is another extreme to be avoided. Recently there has been much activity in behalf of the Teachers' Union. "Such an organization," the argument has run, "has teeth in it." The increasing regimentary spirit of these days, of which I had my experience during the last War, perplexes and bothers me no end.

The major aims of this Association would necessarily have to be couched in general terms. Thus, in these bad days I should think a very desirable aim, however

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COLLEGE ENGLISH ASSOCIATION
Established 1939
Officers pro tem.
President - - - - Robert M. Gay
Treasurer - William R. Richardson
Chairman, Nominating Committee
Henry C. F. Staunton, Notre Dame
Secretary - - - Burges Johnson
Union College, Schenectady, N. Y.

The author, the critic, and the college teacher of English may be partners in an exalted enterprise.

EDITORIALS

Our Constitution

The proposed constitution of the College English Association, in the drafting of which Vermont, Indiana and the Pacific coast each had a hand, provides for a democratic and widely representative control. If members already enrolled have not preserved a copy for reference, it will be reprinted in November, but with at least one essential change. There should be nine directors rather than eight, serving for three years, with three going out of office each year. One member suggests that either by-laws or binding tradition should provide that at least two should be from states west of the Rockies, one or more from the deep south, and the rest scattered from Maine to Colorado. There is provision for effective action by correspondence, if such a widely scattered group cannot assemble.

Several other suggestions have been made; but nearly all who have commented have approved the draft in its entirety. A "News Letter" to members reaching them in November before the annual meeting, will devote space to concise proposals as to other changes, and will outline the method whereby enrolled members may vote by mail or by proxy.

There have been many suggestions as to limitations upon membership. These range from the proposal that there be no limitation, and that any teacher of English or anyone interested in the teaching of English be admitted, to those who would confine the association to those actually teaching in four-year colleges of liberal arts. The majority urge a compact and unified membership, not unwieldy in size.

In considering this question it is well to remember that two great organizations inviting the membership of college English teachers already exist, and that there is little excuse for a third unless it is able to render a definite service to a well-defined group which heartily desires such association. Many of those who have already enrolled in CEA are members also of the Modern Language Association, or the National Council of English Teachers, or of both. The fact that they have most eagerly sought the formation of this new group would indicate that a need exists not fully met by the two older societies. The generous attitude of MLA, in welcoming us into association on the same basis as that of the other language groups, clarifies our relationship on that side. It will be unfortunate if we cannot, through joint committees and joint action, find ways of working toward common ends with the vast number of teachers in high schools and teachers colleges who compose the National Council.

A Periodical Publication

This second issue of The News Letter of CEA makes its appearance without apology for humble format and unpretentious title. Its primary purpose is to convey several items of information to enrolled members, with a minimum of effort and expense. But as a secondary function, even within its narrow compass, it may begin upon that business which has brought us together,—better mutual understanding and exchange of ideas.

Whether or not this association shall publish a periodical of its own is a question of economics – and majority desire. By sending out the first necessary notices in this form, your secretary pro tem hopes to clarify the issue. Evidently some sort of published journal is possible on a very modest budget, and it could grow with the growth of the association. But what is the desire of the present membership?

There are many periodicals available to the college English teacher today which offer material useful to him in his own professional field; and they range from highly technical journals to popular literary reviews found on almost any news-stand. Others are promised, and it is possible that our agitation of hitherto placid waters has evidenced the need in this field and stimulated such growth.

Offers of financial aid in the launching of a more pretentious journal still stand; and there is no dearth of material. From the mass of letters received in response to the first calls for organization, your secretary set aside a score that are rich in suggestion, whimsical comment, or hints of pungent literary criticism. These promise plenty of grist for our own mill, or might be carried to another market and still be of service to us. At the other extreme there is the notion of instructing future secretaries to send out no more than a news-letter at intervals, containing important notices and the lively comments and gossip of our own association, leaving our members with that much more leisure to browse where they will. The recently announced intention of the National Council to change the name of its college edition of the "English Journal" to "College English" may have its bearing on the problem if all promises are fulfilled. But it need not confuse the issue. Some of our members have proposed an American parallel to the "Essays and Studies" of our English colleagues, even borrowing their title. The whole problem calls for full discussion, with nothing to be gained by haste. Concisely expressed opinions from members who wish to go on record now, if mailed to the Secretary pro tem. will be reported in the November issue.

Contemporary Literature

My dear Editor:

I'm too constricted in time even to write a few paragraphs on the subject you mentioned, but here is the gist of my thoughts which may at least serve to start a discussion:

I do not believe in courses in contemporary literature, for I think that the material is still too untested for satisfactory teaching, and that the very large majority of teachers are not sufficiently in the atmosphere of the writing world to interpret and discriminate in any definitive way.

On the other hand, I believe that generally speaking every course in literature not purely philological should be a course in contemporary literature. I do not see how Shakespeare, or Milton, or Wordsworth, or Thoreau can be taught without constant reference to and assimilation with contemporary feeling and thinking, which, after all, is the only feeling and thinking native to the teacher and in which he is instinctively authoritative. I don't mean, of course, anything so cheap as an attempt to illustrate everything in earlier literature by contemporary happenings. I do mean that the teaching of literature should be the teaching of a continuous tradition having an ending which is in our own times.

Very truly yours,
Henry Seidel Canby

As to Creative Writing

I don't know that I can write anything about teaching, because I've done so little of it. To me, there doesn't seem to be much anyone can say about it—as far as teaching writing is concerned.

I think the only real thing anyone can do is to create or recreate a certain enthusiasm for the subject in those who have willingly come to expose themselves to it.

Any rules you try to make about either method or content immediately become dead because the very nature of an art surpasses all rules. Then, too, all arts are in a constant state of flux, and the qualities one generation frowns on are the strengths of the next. A genius often is a man who defies all standing conventions, and thus assists in building a new set of conventions for the mediocre to observe and the next genius to defy.

If we teach from our own knowledge and strengths in our fields, we are only teaching what in all probability will be stale and dead before the taught are producing their contributions. However, if we imbue them with any sort of fire for the subject, an enthusiasm for the tools of the trade, a deep love for the power of the medium, a genuine determination to observe all phases and facets of life about them so that they will have something to express, then they will surely (some few of them) keep plugging away and fighting on until they, in their turn, contribute to that progress which not only is necessary but inescapable.

Eric Knight,
Author of "The Flying Yorkshireman," etc., etc.

Literae Humaniores

Dear Mr. Gay:

I wish to say very heartily that I think an organization devoted to the liberal, cultural, and humanistic aspects of the teaching of English literature is very much needed. As to whether a new journal would be founded or whether an existing one could be made to meet the needs of the situation we can soon learn by experience.

It has for many years been my feeling that the English teachers in this country were too narrowly devoted to problems of technique and too blind to the broader implications of English Literature and its ramifications in the fields of Philosophy and History. I tried to express this in an article ("English as Humane Letters"), printed in the Atlantic Monthly, September 1914, and reprinted in a little book of mine called "The Oxford Stamp."

My own view as to the scope of the organization you could gather from that article. I should like to base the study of English in this country on the School of Literae Humaniores at Oxford, and I think that if we could do that, we would give our Departments of English Literature a dignity and influence which they have never had.

I have great respect for philologists and for Philology as a science, and I admire the heroic efforts of the teachers of English Composition, though I must say that I think the results are singularly meager in proportion to the efforts expended. Neither group, however, has seemed to me to meet the humanistic and cultural needs of the subject.

I hope you will keep me informed of the results of your discussion with other people and the progress of your plans. I should very much like to see such an association as you have in mind.

Frank Aydelotte,
Swarthmore College.

Why Not Samson Agonistes?

I know of no survey text which includes a masterpiece which has always commanded the admiration of my students. When the makers of anthologies can find room for "Volpone" and even for Dryden's "All for Love," why should "Samson Agonistes" be overlooked?

Students can easily find interest in tracing the parallels between the story of Samson and the life of Milton—blindness, marital difficulties, political disappointment. One can thus introduce them to some of the critical problems of the reflection of personality in art and the biographical approach to literature.

The figure of Milton, disappointed in age, his political principles renounced by the nation, cannot fail to awaken the sympathies of students. Who in this decade does not appreciate the problems of the political exile? The manly optimism which was Milton's is also a challenge to human idealism. Many of my students have been drawn from their unthinking adulation of the contemporary by discovering that Milton's attitude toward adversity is more heroic than the fatalism of most modern writers.

Suggest the play to your students, then, even if it involves the inconvenience of relying on library copies! In the matter of purely aesthetic appeal, you will find it valuable as an example of the stately dignity of classical tragedy, a form otherwise not familiar in English literature. The style, more conversational than that of "Paradise Lost," is noble and effective. The plot is simple in structure, yet has its more profound overtones in the significance of Samson's three temptations. Finally, the play contains the beautiful expression of the mood of tragic resignation in the final speech of Samson's aged father, and the lines of the closing chorus constitute the finest expression in literature of the emotional effect of tragedy.

Richard M. Kain,
Ohio Wesleyan University.

Defining the Standard of Literacy

College teachers are well aware that many high school graduates who are unable to express the simplest of ideas frequently offer transcripts of credit admitting them to college. This situation is so perennially a cause of polite cynicism that we are prone to dismiss it with a fatalistic shrug of the shoulders. Far from seeking the niceties of unity, coherence, emphasis, or (Shades of Barrett Wendell!) "elegance," we have come to think ourselves fortunate to discover bare literacy in the writing of entering freshmen. A quotable howler is often our only consolation for an evening's reading of verbs without subjects, subjects without verbs, pronouns without reference, and sentences without agreement, without punctuation, and without perceptible meaning. We have, indeed, broken so many red pencils on vagrant pronouns and maladjusted modifiers that we are in danger of passively taking them for granted and of failing to recognize the alarming proportions of our national illiteracy.

Before we permit ourselves the luxury of blaming this deplorable state of affairs entirely upon the high schools, however, we should recall that the whole college-preparatory program is based upon the stated requirements of the colleges. In all innocence, the high school student has done what he has been told to do. Observing the stipulation of the North Central Association, he has "completed successfully a course of study requiring two hundred minutes of class work each week for three scholastic years." He has drawn a map of the tournament ground in "Ivanhoe"; he has outlined Macaulay's "Life of Johnson" (still inexplicably in the standard reading list); he has located to the exact line the point at which occurs the climax of action in "The Merchant of Venice"; he has memorized "The Daffodils" by a poet named Wadsworth. His teachers, authorized by the National Council of Teachers of English "Experience Curriculum," may even have assisted him in "giving fancy rein," in "solving puzzles," in "listening to radio broadcasts," and in "enjoying photoplays." If the chances to have attended school in Ohio, the student may have been given experience in "social relationships between girls and boys, attending the theater or athletic contests, riding buses and other situations vital to school life." Really a long-suffering individual, he has fulfilled these requirements in order to prepare himself for college. Then, to his understandable surprise, he finds that his teacher in Freshman English asks for something entirely different. That something, as it happens, is literacy.

After admission to college, indeed, the student discovers the existence of a requirement concerning which the catalogues have remained austerely silent. In all his courses, though most apparently in English, he finds that he must express his thoughts in coherent, grammatical sentences. For some students this barrier is only a low hurdle to be taken in stride; for others, however, it becomes a barbed wire entanglement. Although the exact nature of this requirement may remain something of a mystery, its reality as a qualitative measure of a student's work is often painfully evident. It is here, indeed, that many students meet for the first time the qualitative test of adult achievement, a test of which they have had no prior intimation. Hence arises the paradoxical position of the teacher of English. He is asked to impose an "ex post facto" literacy requirement upon students who have been graduated from high school and admitted to college by virtue of grades and credits in "English," rather than for demonstrated ability to use the language. Except in colleges which require students to take the College Board examinations, the familiar ordeal by impromptu theme comes, as a rule, after the student enters Freshman English, not before he is admitted to college.

That there should be any need to define this test, to stipulate that literacy is requisite for survival in college, may seem a shocking comment upon the state of education. But in failing to make this requirement explicit we have left the formulating of high school English objectives to those who would add all manner of irrelevant duties to the day's work of the already over-loaded teacher. Social objectives, propaganda programs, personality adjustments, recreational features — all have been placed in the high school English course. Literacy, meanwhile, has come to seem only a step-child of the curriculum.

How does it happen then that the colleges have not made their position on this matter unmistakable? One reason, I have no doubt, is a diffidence in stipulating formally what we think must be evident to any person of common sense. Another, perhaps, is our recognition of language as a flexible and constantly evolving thing about which it is both difficult and dangerous to dogmatize. But even philological liberalism will grant that the usage of educated men and women is essentially uniform on many basic principles. Indeed, as Professor George Philip Krapp wrote, "The great body of English usage is . . . made up of forms of the language with respect to which there is practically no difference of opinion." It is this body of English usage which I take to constitute basic literacy and which I believe the colleges should regard as the minimum attainment acceptable in college writing. These principles of language are relatively few and simple; if they were to be explicitly formulated and declared requisite for admission to college, our position would be greatly clarified, both for our students and for ourselves. Above all, such clarification would supply relevant direction to high school instruction in English composition.

Lists of minimum essentials have long been used within the freshman course, but only recently has there been any attempt to use these lists in correlating high school instruction with the writing needs of college students. The North Central Association, for example, has issued a statement of entrance requirements in English which is useful, even though its terms are general rather than specific. This statement, in turn, has been given detailed interpretation for use in Michigan high schools by a committee of high school and university teachers. At the University of Wisconsin a revision of an old and well-known set of standards has been prepared for state-wide use by a committee representing the University, the public schools, and the state department of education. On a more modest scale, the list of minimum essentials published by the English staff of the University of New Hampshire has been widely and advantageously distributed to the high schools of the state. Another project of the same type has recently been undertaken by the Ohio College Association, and doubtless such experiments have been carried out elsewhere as well.

On a strictly local scale, the University of Akron has had considerable success with its recently issued description of literacy requirements. This leaflet offers a concise statement of seven grammatical principles and four punctuation principles. It also contains a brief statement concerning vocabulary and diction, a spelling list of eighty-four words in common use, and a somewhat shorter pronunciation list. Type sentences illustrate each of the specific points mentioned, and a simple marginal annotation permits easy reference to the leaflet in theme correction. The title page bears the statement that only work which conforms to the standards described in the leaflet is acceptable in student writing; this is interpreted to mean that themes containing any of the proscribed errors shall be graded no higher than D. This is a frankly dogmatic attitude, but as actually applied in the classroom it has produced excellent results. Probably the most significant feature of the Akron experiment, however, has been the interest manifested by the high school teachers of the city. Already they have put the leaflet to practical use in college-preparatory classes.

Whatever the merits of these various projects, they have as yet exerted only local influence. They tend to agree on the essentials stressed, but they vary considerably in the degree to which they make the standard explicit. Useful as such local experimentation is, it now seems highly desirable to attempt some national coordination of these efforts. Possibly the excellent, though very brief, statement of the College Entrance Examination Board should be interpreted in detail, its implications rendered explicit. Possibly an entirely new approach would be more advantageous. But one need not have authoritarian leanings to desire a standard definition of what is already essentially a common view of basic literacy.

It would seem peculiarly appropriate for the College English Association to undertake this task of defining the literacy requisite in freshmen. No other organization represents just those teachers most concerned, and no other group could speak on this subject with such authority. It should not be thought a disadvantage that the Association would have no power to enforce the requirement, for any such program would of necessity be administered locally. But if the plan could be carried out by a committee acting for this Association, it would be of notable service both to the members of the organization and to higher education generally.

Years ago the College Entrance Examination Board adopted what was to become the standard list of readings for high school literature study. Possibly it is not too much to hope that a list of objectives for the study of composition might ultimately give us college freshmen whose knowledge of sentence structure would be as much a matter of course as their knowledge, say, of the tournament ground in "Ivanhoe."

Harlan W. Hamilton,
University of Akron.

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And the Lords of the Philistines Came Up

(Continued from Page 1)

still the truth—that the ripening of a mind cannot be profitably forced.

If the first theory was hard and the second soft, the third strikes one as windy. It catches the sentimental by a loose eloquence about the needs of the country and of democracy. But like the others it blinks the fact that the growth of wisdom in the individual as in society is slow.

One particular appeal of this new dispensation is that it wears the garb of science. It really is the child or foster-child or love-child of psychology and sociology. Although these are still new and raw, they can be very solemn and their child takes after them. It too uses a jargon that gives it an air of being scientific. But the important question is this: is it a wise child?

For the acquirement of wisdom is not a science, but an art—the art of distilling knowledge from experience. And it is, as some French writer has said, 'mainly a matter of nuances.' By this I suppose he meant that wisdom comes not from theorizing but from living, that life has a hundred phases and a myriad facets, the meaning of which comes by chance as much as by seeking. Wisdom is therefore by nature hostile to programs, wary of dogma, chary even of preaching. True science of course in the end is an aspect of wisdom, but only when its signficance for life has become obvious. Science as such has no use—indeed can have no use—for nuances. But literature really exists on and for them.

To reduce literature to a 'social study', then, is to destroy most of it. For its special value lies in its power to express, as science cannot and as practicality does not want to, not only the dominant tones but the overtones of life, without which life is hardly more than meat, drink, and raiment. Overtones make the difference between music and noise. By reducing literature to its practical meanings only, we ignore most of that which makes it act through our feelings upon our imagination; and what the world needs even more than practicality is imagination. By doing so we, in short, over-simplify it; as, in painting, a background of unbroken color has, as the artists say, no values. But the great importance of literature as a study for the young is that it helps them to realize, not merely one set of values, but the immense variety and complexity of all values in life both social and personal.

In recent years I have found that, for the first time in my life, I have been called upon to defend the teaching of literature. In the past one might be criticized for the way one taught it, but rarely for teaching it at all. The trouble is that those who attack it nowadays are not mere Gradgrinds, but men trained in another order of thinking. The values I have tried to suggest they simply do not understand. They call themselves realists, implying that I am a sentimentalist, if not an old fogy. To me their sort of realism is a new form of diabolism. But they are very powerful. They have the public ear. If we don't agree with them it is high time that we prepared our defence.

Robert M. Gay.

Why the CEA?

(Continued from Page 1)

phrased, would be: **To foster and promote the cause of humane letters.** For my part I would consider that aim sufficient inducement for joining such an Association . . . .

One phase of propaganda (there are two kinds: one that is relatively true and that which is absolutely false) which this Association might well undertake is the promulgation of American humane letters. Let me first explain that I am a naturalized citizen, English-born. Now because native-born teachers seemed to prefer the teaching of European culture, I have had many opportunities of studying and teaching American History and Literature. To me, therefore, has been vouchsafed the richest experience of a man's life—what the foreign language teacher calls the acquiring of another soul. I think I begin to see and appreciate the broad highway of this Democracy and its hinterland,—I sometimes stand amazed at the neglect of its Cavalcade of sweet human endeavour. Rarely have I met a student, Upper or Lower Division, who had conned and understood the theory of history in Emerson's **History;** the two verses which precede it would alone give an American a decent respect for himself and his fellows. Our students know much these days, as indeed they must, of sound-and-fury supermen, but next to nothing of American pioneers such as Francis Parkman's Thomas Bickford and Madeline de Vercheres. When a definition of "transcendentalism" is wanted, it is a little disconcerting to find they do not know **The Chambered Nautilus.** The moral of it all is in **The Bluebird.** . . .

In my judgment, it would be a fatal mistake to organize for mercenary reasons. Nor can I see much value in organizing for the purpose of "talking shop." After all there are innumerable books on that topic. There is more validity, I think, to the "fraternal" purpose; that, however, should arise naturally out of the mutual adventure which a common purpose holds. Nor, so far as my experence goes, is organization necessary in order to protect the teacher of Literature in his freedom to teach; that bridge could be crossed if come to. It would be a mistake, I feel, to affiliate with any political, social, religious or economic group, but equally a mistake to put a taboo on discussions arising out of such values inasmuch as the issues come within the domain of letters.

In order to function we must first organize. The question of formulating aims and objectives, of whether we shall have a periodical, of its nature, etc., must attend that. The mutual purpose that lies in our love of Literature seems sufficient warranty for organization.

If one has faith in a cause, the next thing is to be practical about it. Therefore, I am enclosing my check for what seems to me should be the amount of the annual dues. There has, of course, been no solicitation of funds by you or any other pioneer of what seems to me a needed organization. If there were only one hundred of us in the United States interested in fostering humane letters through this Association, that would seem sufficient for a beginning. The soil being Literature, good seed, well-planted, cannot fail to grow.

Arthur Yates
Long Island University.

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